



Senate Energy Committee Approves Thomas-Feinstein Bill to Provide Funding for Yosemite Schools

-- Committee also approved expansion of Golden Gate National Recreation Area --
March 24, 2004

Washington DC - The U.S. Senate Energy Committee today unanimously approved a package of legislation, sponsored by Senators Craig Thomas (R-WY) and Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) that would provide funding for three small schools in Yosemite National Park and add 4,500 acres to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Mateo County.

“Today’s action represents a critical step forward in passing these two measures,” Senator Feinstein said. **“The Yosemite schools bill is important legislation, which would prevent some Yosemite students from having to be driven more than 45 miles each day to and from school. Additionally, the legislation to expand the Golden Gate National Refuge Area will protect the sweeping views of the San Mateo Coast and ensure the protection of rich farmland, several miles of public trails, and an incredible array of wildlife and vegetation.”**

- **The Yosemite Schools measure** authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide up to \$400,000 in supplemental funds for three small schools, which educate 130 students, in Yosemite Park (Wawona, El Portal and Mariposa elementary schools). These schools carry a combined deficit of over \$240,000, and in recent years they have had to cut down on educational services and faculty just to keep the schools running.
- **The measure to expand Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA)** would add 4,500 acres of pristine natural land to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Mateo County including a 4,076 acre parcel known as the Rancho Corral de Tierra.

The mountainous property, which surrounds the coastal towns of Moss Beach and Montara, was previously purchased by the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST). The Trust has agreed to transfer the land to the Federal Government for about half of the purchase cost.

- Two hundred acres of leased agricultural land, which had been included in previous versions of the boundary adjustment, are not included in the bill that passed the Committee.

“I feel strongly that the family who leases these 200 acres should be able to continue to farm them, as they have for the past 25 years,” Senator Feinstein said. **“That is why I have worked with the landowner, the family who leases the land, and the California Farm Bureau to protect their ability to work the land. While the family would have been able to continue to farm those acres if the land had been included in the recreation area, ultimately, it made more sense**

not to include them in the boundary adjustment. It is my hope that this will resolve any remaining questions regarding this bill, and it will be approved by the full Senate and signed into law soon.”

Versions of these measures were approved last year and in the previous by the Senate, but never signed into law.

Companion legislation to the Yosemite measure was sponsored in the House by Rep. George Radanovich (R-Calif.). Companion legislation to the GGNRA measure was sponsored in the House by Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.)

###